

24 October 2025

Dear Belper Families,

October Newsletter

As we reach the end of a very busy and successful first half term, I wanted to take a moment to share some of our news and celebrate the many highlights from across the school from the past seven weeks.

Staff Farewell

We begin with a fond farewell to our wonderful technician John Bolton, who retires today after an incredible 21 years of service. John has been a tremendous asset to the school, not only in his day-to-day work but also through the hundreds of hours he has given in his spare time to support our students on Duke of Edinburgh expeditions. John's kindness and commitment will be sorely missed by staff and students alike. We are delighted, however, that he has kindly agreed to return to continue supporting our DofE programme. We wish him every happiness in his well-earned retirement.

MP Visit

This week we also welcomed our local MP, Jonathan Davies, to Belper School. I invited him in to look at the fabric of the building, as despite our very best efforts, some areas have seen better days. We are now exploring ways of funding essential improvements. Jonathan is particularly passionate about improving SEND provision in our area, and we discussed our recent bid to the local authority for a new Alternative Provision for a small number of KS2 and KS3 students. We are pleased that our bid has been agreed in principle, and we now move into the feasibility and planning stage. We'll keep you updated as things progress.

During his visit, Jonathan also toured our ACCESS area, where one of our students, Jamie, proudly showed him around our Forest School, highlighting the fantastic activities taking place there. It is always wonderful to see the enthusiasm of our students and staff in this unique and nurturing environment.

New Year 7 Applications

Our Year 7 students have settled into life at Belper brilliantly. It seems a long time ago now that they began the year with their team-building trip to Drum Hill, which really set the tone for their positive start. We held our Year 5/6 Open Evening earlier this half term as we start to prepare for our future intake. A reminder that the deadline for applications for a Year 7 2026 start is **midnight on 31 October**. Applications can be made via this link.

Sixth Form Open Evening

It has also been a great start for our Year 12 students. This year, we welcomed 104 students into our Sixth Form, which is significantly higher than our usual intake of around 75. This is a testament to the fantastic experience students have here and to our inspiring teaching staff. We can't wait to see what this talented cohort achieves in the coming months. A reminder that our Sixth Form Open Evening takes place on **Thursday 6 November**, just after half term. We would love to see our Year 11 students and families there on the night.

Year 11 Mock Exams

Speaking of Year 11, their mock exams begin in the **week commencing 10 November**. Students have now received their timetable booklets and revision packs, and we hope their revision is well underway. Earlier this term, every Year 11 student met individually with a member of the Senior Leadership Team or their Head of Year. These one-to-one meetings were an opportunity to check in, offer guidance, and help them start planning their next steps. It's an exciting time for them as they prepare for the future.

Children in Need

Looking ahead, we're excited to be welcoming BBC Radio Derby to school on Wednesday 5 November as they complete their Children in Need 25-mile three-legged race right here at Belper! Years 7 and 8 will be our spectators, and some of our Year 12 students and staff will be joining in the final leg. Students in Years 7 and 8 are invited to wear yellow or something spotty that day (please don't buy anything new especially for it). We'll also be holding a whole school Children in Need money-raising event on November 14th. More details will follow after the half term break.

School Trips and Experiences

We've had an excellent half term of trips and experiences across the school:

- Year 7 – Team building at Drum Hill
- Year 8 – History visits to Belper Mill
- Year 9 – Trip to the Imperial War Museum
- A Level Geology – Field trip to Arran
- A Level Geography – Fieldwork at Flamborough Head
- A Level English – Theatre trip to see The Great Gatsby

We were also thrilled to host our second Japanese exchange with Toyota City, and we're so grateful to the families who welcomed visiting students into their homes. The exchange was a huge success, with friendships and memories made for life.

Finally, we enjoyed a fantastic Friday night dance show organised by two of our incredibly talented Year 11 students, Hope and Addie, showcasing the amazing creativity and confidence of our young people across all year groups.

I'm sending this newsletter from Beijing, where I'm accompanying our Year 11 cultural tour to China. They all say *ni hao!* We'll share more about this trip in our November newsletter.

Thank you all for your continued support this term. It's been a busy, inspiring few weeks, and we're so proud of all that our students and staff have achieved. I wish you all a very restful and enjoyable half term break.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Matilde Warden". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a small dot at the end.

Matilde Warden
Headteacher

